DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 188 096 CG 014 493

AUTHOR Orlofsky, Jacob L.
TITLE Psychological Androgyny and Male-Female Attraction.
PUB DATE 79
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (87th, New York, NY, September 1-5, 1979). Best copy available.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Androgyny; *Congruence (Psychology); Dating (Social); Individual Differences; *Interpersonal Attraction; *Mate Selection; *Personality Traits; Prediction; *Sex Role; Sex Stereotypes; Social Influences; Socialization
IDENTIFIERS *Bem Sex Role Inventory

ABSTRACT

Changes in men's and women's societal roles and in their personality characteristics might be expected to lead to corresponding changes in the personal relations between sexes. Male (N=140) and female (N=95) college students, classified as sex-typed, cross-sex-typed, androgynous, or undifferentiated on the basis of their Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) scores, rated their ideal dating partners/potential spouses on the BSRI items. Predictions that androgynous individuals would describe similarly androgynous ideals while sex-typed individuals would prefer complementarily sex-typed ideals were not confirmed. All subjects described ideals with a relative complementarity in sex-typing: the male more masculine than his partner, the female more feminine than hers. Results suggest that societal norms and stereotypes must be considered in addition to individual differences in psychological set-typing in predicting individual's hetereosexual attraction patterns, and that psychological androgyny does not have as much generality regarding individuals' life styles as has been attributed to it. (Author)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ED188096

Psychological Androgyny and Male-Female Attraction

Jacob L. Orlofsky

University of Missouri-St. Louis

Paper presented at APA Convention, N.Y.C., 1979

CG 014493

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Jacob L. Orlofsky

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Psychological Androgyny and Male-Female Attraction

With increasing equality between men and women in contemporary society, there is a shift in the roles which men and women occupy in relation to each other. According to Spence and Helmreich (1978), "the political, economic and social changes over the past decades have led to a blurring of the formerly sharp division between the roles of women and men." Along with this blurring of roles "men and women may also be in the process of coming closer together in their personality makeup" (p. 10).

These trends have led psychologists to reconceptualize sex-role behaviors. Whereas masculinity and femininity have long been viewed as bipolar opposites, innately characteristic of men and women respectively, current trends view the two as independent dimensions, a product more of social learning than of innate biological differences between the sexes. According to this more recent perspective, individuals may develop both masculine, instrumental personality traits and feminine, expressive traits, a sex-role outcome labelled psychological androgyny (Bem, 1974). Furthermore, androgyny is hypothesized to be a more adaptive outcome, leading to greater behavioral flexibility, than traditional sex-typing, particularly now that changing societal conditions require fewer areas of specialization in the roles men and women occupy.

With such changes taking place in men's and women's societal roles

and in their personality characteristics we might expect to see corresponding changes in the personal relations between the sexes. Whereas previously the societal norm was (presumably) the traditionally sex-typed couple (the masculine man and the feminine woman), the current trend would appear to be toward increasing numbers of couples in which both partners have androgynous personalities. Such couples might be expected to develop more egalitarian relationships, with less specialized role and task division than is customary in traditional male-female relationships.

A first step in studying how changing sex roles are affecting marital and other heterosexual relationships is to examine the interpersonal attraction patterns of androgynous versus sex-typed people. Do androgynous individuals differ from sex-typed individuals in their heterosexual attraction patterns? The existence of traditional stereotypes of masculinity and femininity suggest that sex-typed individuals are most attracted to other-sex partners who themselves are sex-typed (i.e., the masculine-typed male and the feminine-typed female). In contrast, androgynous individuals, who manifest both masculine and feminine personality characteristics and behaviors, might be expected to be most attracted to other-sex partners who also exhibit androgynous sex-role characteristics.

These hypotheses parallel the two approaches which psychologists have taken for predicting the relationship between personality characteristics and interpersonal attraction, the <u>complementary needs</u> and the <u>similarity</u> hypotheses. The complementary needs hypothesis predicts that two people who possess dissimilar but interdependent personality

characteristics (like dominance-submissiveness) should be attracted to each other (Winch, 1963). This hypothesis applies nicely to the traditionally sex-typed couple. The similarity hypothesis predicts that a male and female will be attracted to each other to the extent that they possess similar attitudes and characteristics, a prediction which fits nicely for the androgynous couple.

The past research testing these two hypotheses has yielded contradictory findings, with some studies supporting the similarity hypothesis of male-female attraction (Banta and Hetherington, 1963; Meyer and Pepper, 1977; Palmer and Byrne, 1970) and other studies supporting the complementary needs hypothesis (Becker, 1964; Kerckhoff and Davis, 1962; Winch, Ktsanes and Ktsanes, 1954). However, while some of these studies tested for similarity/complementarity effects on personality characteristics like dominance-submissiveness and assertiveness-receptiveness, none of them focused specifically on how sex role characteristics relate to male-female attraction.

Two studies did test similarity/complementarity of sex-role attitudes (Seyfried and Hendrick, 1973; Yehl, Keeley and Grush, Note 1) and found a general tendency for males and females to be most attracted to other-sex persons with "complementary" (i.e., similar) sex-role attitudes (e.g., a woman who sees herself as taking primary responsibility for child care is more attracted to a male who plans to be the primary breadwinner than to a male who prefers child care activities). Similarly, a study of college dating couples (Peplau, Rubin and Hill, 1976) found that partners tended to share similar sex-role attitudes, with sex-role

traditionalists likely to date other traditionalists (complementary role attitudes) and sex-role egalitarians likely to date those with similarly egalitarian attitudes.

Deutsch and Gilbert (1976) examined the attractiveness of masculine and feminine personality characteristics to males and females. These investigators asked college students to describe their ideal other-sex person using the items of the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974). In general, the students tended to describe ideals which were within or close to the androgynous range defined by Bem (1974) ($t_{\overline{F-M}} < +1$ but > -1). Thus, females' ideal man was androgynous (-.96), while males described a slightly feminine ideal woman (+1.16). However, neither sex described an exactly androgynous ($t_{\overline{F-M}} = 0.00$) ideal. Rather, males' ideal woman was somewhat more feminine than masculine on the average, and females' ideal man was slightly more masculine than feminine.

While these data provide information regarding what the average male and female regard as appropriate and ideal in an other-sex person, they do not indicate what their personal heterosexual attraction patterns are. Nor do they indicate whether androgynous males and females differ from sex-typed (or cross sex-typed) individuals in what they find personally attractive in an other-sex person.

This study was designed to assess differences among androgynous, undifferentiated, sex-typed and cross sex-typed individuals in their personal attraction patterns. In brief, subjects who had been categorized on the basis of their prior BSRI scores were asked to describe the personality characteristics of their ideal dating partner/potential spouse

by rating how characteristic each of the BSRI items would be of their ideal. The major hypothesis, consistent with the rationale offered earlier, was that androgynous subjects would describe androgynous ideals (similarity rule), while sex-typed subjects would describe (complimentarily) sex-typed ideals. No predictions were made for cross sex-typed or undifferentiated individuals.

Method

Subjects

One hundred forty male and 95 female undergraduate students enrolled in Introductory Psychology classes at the University of Missouri-St. Louis served as subjects.

Measures and Procedure

Students were administered the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem, 1974) under standard instructions in their classes at the beginning of the semester along with several other self-report measures not pertinent to the present report. Four to six weeks later students in the classes who signed up for an ostensibly unrelated experiment were tested in groups of 10-20. At this time they received an additional administration of the BSRI with instructions to use the personality characteristics to "describe an ideal dating partner or potential spouse for yourself."

Two sets (self and dating partner) of four scores were derived for each subject: Masculinity, Femininity, Neutral (general favorability) and Androgyny, the latter being obtained by subtracting the mean masculinity from the mean femininity score and multiplying the difference by a constant of 2.322 to approximate the t-ratio score used by Bem (1974,

1975).

Subjects were classified into masculine-typed, feminine-typed, androgynous, and undifferentiated sex role groups on the basis of their masculinity and femininity scores using the medians approach advocated by Spence, Helmreich and Stapp (1975). The rounded means of the medians for the sexes were used rather than the medians of the total smaple because of unequal numbers of males and females. For both scales, these cut-off points were equal to 4.85, which are consistent with those generally obtained for college samples (Bem, 1977; Jones, Chernovetz and Hansson, 1978; Orlofsky and Windle, 1978).

Results

For clarify of presentation, 1 x 4 analyses of variance of ideal dating partner's (DP) sex-role scores were conducted separately for males and females.

Females

Analyses of variance on female subjects' BSRI descriptions of an ideal dating partner/potential spouse revealed significant differences among the sex-role groups in DP masculinity scores, $F(3, 91) = 6.44$, $p < .0006$, and femininity scores, $F = 8.64$, $p < .0001$, nearly significant differences in androgyny scores, $F = 2.30$, $p < .08$, and no differences in neutral scores, $F = 1.16$, $p < .33$.

Mean scores for the sex-role groups are presented in Table 1. Predictions that androgynous women would describe androgynous ideals while sex-typed women would describe complimentarily sex-typed partners were not confirmed, as both groups described slightly sex-typed ideal partners

(just outside of the androgynous range). Undifferentiated women's DP androgyny scores were basically equivalent to the scores of these other groups, although these were in the androgynous range. Cross sex-typed women described significantly more masculine-typed ideal dating partners than the other three groups ($p < .05$).[1]

- - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Insert Table 1 about here

- - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Males

Analyses of variance on male subjects' BSRI DP descriptions revealed significant differences among the sex-role groups on DP masculinity, $F(3, 136) = 7.45$, $p < .0002$, femininity, $F = 6.68$, $p < .0004$, and androgyny scores, $F = 5.37$, $p < .0002$, with no differences on neutral scores, $F < 1$.

Mean scores for the sex-role groups are presented in Table 2. Predictions that androgynous men would describe androgynous ideals while masculine-typed men would describe complementarily sex-typed partners were not confirmed, as all of the groups described sex-typed ideal partners. In fact, a trend in the opposite direction was obtained, as masculine typed men described somewhat more balanced (less sex-typed) ideals than androgynous men. Undifferentiated males' descriptions were similar to those of androgynous males, while feminine-typed males described the most feminine-typed ideals. These DP androgyny score differences between masculine-typed and androgynous plus undifferentiated subjects and between these three groups versus feminine-typed subjects

were both significant ($p < .05$).[1]

- - - - - - - - - - - - -

Insert Table 2 about here

- - - - - - - - - - - - -

Conclusions

In summary, although the sex role groups differed in the degree of sex typing desired in their ideal dating partners, they all tended to describe ideals who were at least slightly sex-typed. Thus, females on the average described ideal dating partners who were slightly masculine-typed (DP Androgyny mean = -1.18), and males described relatively highly feminine-typed ideal partners (DP Androgyny mean = +1.93). These findings may be compared to those of Deutsch and Gilbert (1976), who, it will be recalled, assessed subjects' ideal other-sex people (as opposed to an ideal dating partner/potential spouse). Their female subjects described a slightly masculine (but still within the androgynous range) ideal man, the androgyny score (-.96) being quite similar to the average score obtained here on dating partner descriptions. Their males, on the other hand, described a slightly feminine ideal female (+1.16), while the males in the present study described a considerably more feminine ideal (+1.93). These differences might simply reflect differences in the populations sampled by the two studies. On the other hand, they might also suggest that while college males believe that the ideal woman should manifest nearly as much masculine as feminine traits, they prefer that a woman they date or marry should be predominantly feminine in her characteristics. [This suggestion is reminiscent of Komoravsky's (1976) findings

that many college men who endorse egalitarian values are actually considerably more traditional in their personal choices and behavior. These data also suggest that Deutsch and Gilbert (1976) may have been premature in concluding that women hold inaccurate perceptions of man's ideal woman. If women are conflicted in their self and ideal self-concepts and in what they believe men find desirable, the source of these conflicts does not stem from their inaccurate beliefs, as Deutsch and Gilbert suggest, but rather it may stem from their being pulled between what they personally would want to be (androgynous) and what they (accurately) perceive most men want them to be (predominantly feminine)]. In contrast to the findings for men, females' abstract and personal ideals regarding the sex-typed characteristics of men appear to be more consistent with each other, in both cases the ideal male being described as only slightly more masculine than feminine.

With respect to the sex-role group differences, the hypothesis that sex-typed subjects would describe complementarily sex-typed ideal partners while androgynous subjects would describe androgynous ideals was not supported. An opposite tendency, in fact, was found for males, as masculine-typed males described ideals closer to the androgynous range than the androgynous males (and feminine-typed males described the most feminine ideals). Androgynous females did tend to describe ideals close to the androgynous range, but so did feminine-typed females, and it was the masculine-typed females who described the most extremely masculine-typed ideals.

These findings suggest that neither a simple complementarity nor

similarity position can account for the sex-role traits which individuals find attractive in heterosexual partners. Rather, a combination of the two positions best fits the data. That is, all individuals--androgynous and cross sex-typed as well as sex-typed--seek complementary patterns of sex role traits in their partners, such that the male is more masculine and the female more feminine.[2] However, in each case there seems to be an optimal balance which is sought, a degree of similarity, such that the desired difference in sex-typed personality traits between the two partners is not too extreme.

In interpreting these results it is important to keep in mind that sex roles may not be a unitary phenomenon (comprising closely related personality traits, interests, attitudes and role behaviors) as traditional conceptions and even some current conceptions seem to presume (e.g., Bem's, 1976, studies of sex-typed avoidance versus androgynous acceptance of cross-sex behaviors and her theorizing about sex role transcendance). Rather, as Spence (Note 2) points out, there are many sex-role behaviors which are only weakly related to masculine and feminine personality traits. For example, Spence (Note 2) cites research showing that behaviors which have strong societal norms and conformity pressures associated with them, such as sex-typing of career selection, sexual preference, and even attitudes toward the roles of men and women, are closely related to gender but only weakly related to within-sex differences in masculine and feminine personality traits. Similarly, it may also be the case that heterosexual attraction patterns are governed more by societal stereotypes and norms than by individual differences in sex role personality traits.

According to a norm which may be on the decline but is still probably quite prevalent in the society, husbands should be more masculine but less feminine than their wives. This norm is consistent with the findings obtained in the present study, where each male sex role group described ideal dating partners/wives whose androgyny scores were more feminine than their own, and each female group tended to describe somewhat more masculine partners.[2]

In conclusion, it appears that sex-typing and psychological androgyny, as currently defined with respect to masculine and feminine personality traits, do not have as much generality regarding individuals' life styles as recent writers (e.g., Bem, 1976) have implied. Androgynous individuals are not any more likely to be attracted to androgynous dating partners/potential spouses than sex-typed individuals, and they may not be any more likely to develop egalitarian relationships. Thus, though there is some support for the notion that androgynous individuals are less tied to traditional sex-role behaviors than sex-typed individuals (Bem, 1975; Bem and Lenney, 1976; Orlofsky and Windle, 1978), androgyny, as presently defined and measured, does not necessarily imply sex role transcendance or sex role egalitarianism. Developments such as these are likely to be more directly dependent on societal attitudes and norms and on personal ideologies than on a simple balance of stereotypically masculine and feminine personality traits.

Naturally, caution must be exercised in generalizing these results at this time. For example, questions remain about whether similar findings would be obtained with other subject populations (e.g., high school

students, adults, various socio-economic groups). Questions also remain as to whether the actual partner choices of androgynous and sex-typed individuals correspond to the ideal choices found here, or whether, if marital interactions and role enactments were studied, androgynous couples might be seen to actually establish more egalitarian relationships than sex-typed couples.

Reference Notes

1. Yehl, J. G., Keeley, K. A., and Grush, J. E. Mental role decisions, sex differences, and attraction: Are a "libber" and "chauvinist" really incompatible? Paper presented at the meeting of the Midwestern Psychological Association, Chicago, May, 1976.
2. Spence, J. T. Traits, roles and the concept of an androgyny. Paper presented at the conference on Perspectives in the Psychology of Women, Michigan State University, East Lansing, May, 1977.

References

Banta, T. J., & Hetherington, M. Relations between needs of friends and fiances. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 1963, 66, 401-404.

Becker, G. The complementary needs hypothesis: Authoritarianism, dominance and other Edwards Personal Preference Schedule Scores. Journal of Personality, 1964, 32, 45-56.

Bem, S. L. The measurement of psychological androgyny. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1974, 47, 155-162.

Bem, S. L. Sex-role adaptability: One consequence of psychological androgyny. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1975, 33, 634-643.

Bem, S. L. Probing the promise of androgyny. In A. G. Kaplan & J. P. Bean (Eds.), Beyond sex-role stereotypes: Readings toward a psychology of androgyny. Boston: Little, Brown, 1976.

Bem, S. L. On the utility of alternative procedures for assessing psychological androgyny. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1977, 45, 196-205.

Bem, S. L., & Lenney, E. Sex-typing and the avoidance of cross-sex behavior. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1976, 33, 48-54.

Block, J. H. Conceptions of sex role: Some cross-cultural and longitudinal perspectives. American Psychologist, 1973, 28, 512-526.

Deutsch, C. J., & Gilbert, L. A. Sex-role stereotypes: Effect on perceptions of self and others and on personal adjustment. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1976, 23, 373-379.

Jones, W. H., Chernovetz, M. E. O'C. & Hansson, R. O. The enigma of androgyny: Differential implications for males and females? Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1978, 46, 298-313.

Kerckhoff, A. C., & Davis, K. E. Value consensus and need complementarity in mate selection. American Sociological Review, 1962, 27, 295-303.

Komarovsky, M. Dilemmas of masculinity: A study of college men. New York: Norton, 1976.

Meyer, J. P., & Pepper, S. Need compatibility and marital adjustment in young married couples. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1977, 35, 331-342.

Orlofsky, J. L., & Windle, M. T. Sex role orientation, behavioral adaptability, and personal adjustment. Sex Roles, 1978, 4, 801-811.

Orlofsky, J. L., Aslin, A. L., & Ginsburg, S. D. Differential effectiveness of two classification procedures on the Bem Sex Role Inventory. Journal of Personality Assessment, 1977, 41, 414-416.

Palmer, J., & Byrne, D. Attraction toward dominant and submissive strangers: Similarity versus complementarity. Journal of Experimental Research in Personality, 1970, 4, 108-115.

Peplau, L. A., Rubin, Z., & Hill, C. T. The sexual balance of power. Psychology Today, 1976, 10, 142-151.

Pursell, S. A., & Banikiotes, P. G. Androgyny and initial interpersonal attraction. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 1978, 4, 235-239.

Seyfried, B. A., & Hendrick, C. When do opposites attract? When they are opposite in sex and sex-role attitudes. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1973, 25, 15-20.

Spence, J. T., Helmreich, R., & Stapp, J. A short version of the Attitudes toward Women Scale (AWS). Bulletin of the Psychonomic Society, 1973, 2, 219-220.

Spence, J. T., & Helmreich, R. The psychological dimensions of masculinity and femininity: Their correlates and antecedents. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978.

Spence, J. T., Helmreich, R., & Stapp, J. Ratings of self and peers on sex-role attributes and their relation to self-esteem and conceptions of masculinity and femininity. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1975, 32, 29-39.

Winch, R. F. The modern family. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1963.

Winch, R. F., Ktsanes, T., & Ktsanes, V. The theory of complementary needs in mate selection: An analytical and descriptive study. American Sociological Review, 1954, 19, 241-249.

Footnotes

[1]Post-hoc comparisons were tested using Scheffé's method.

[2]This wasn't exactly the case for masculine-typed women. Inspection of the Table 1 means shows that there was little difference in their self and DP androgyny scores, and that while DP was slightly higher than self in masculinity, DP was also higher in femininity.

Table 1

Mean Dating Partner and Self (in parentheses) Androgyny, Masculinity, Femininity, and Neutral BSRI Scores for the Female Sex Role Groups

Sex Role Group	N	Androgyny ($\bar{F}$-$\bar{M}$) (2.322)	Masculinity	Femininity	Neutral
Masculine	13	-2.05 (-2.32)	5.60 (5.30)	4.72 (4.30)	5.68 (4.81)
Androgynous	29	-1.12 (+0.23)	5.74 (5.37)	5.25 (5.47)	5.48 (5.08)
Feminine	41	-1.06 (+2.82)	5.54 (4.18)	5.08 (5.40)	5.57 (5.10)
Undifferentiated	12	-0.81 (+0.90)	5.09 (4.17)	4.74 (4.56)	5.73 (4.86)
Total	95	-1.18 (+1.08)	5.55 (4.70)	5.04 (5.16)	5.58 (5.02)
Standard Deviation		1.35 (2.20)	.47 (.73)	.42 (.56)	.44 (.43)

Table 2

Mean Dating Partner and Self (in parentheses) Androgyny, Masculinity, Femininity, and Neutral BSRI Scores for the Male Sex Role Groups

Sex Role Group	N	Androgyny ($\bar{F}$-$\bar{M}$) (2.322)	Masculinity	Femininity	Neutral
Masculine	60	+1.37 (-2.47)	4.69 (5.41)	5.28 (4.34)	5.35 (4.85)
Androgynous	30	+2.00 (-0.88)	4.77 (5.53)	5.63 (5.15)	5.37 (4.94)
Feminine	16	+3.06 (+1.60)	4.26 (4.48)	5.58 (5.18)	5.42 (4.82)
Undifferentiated	34	+2.30 (+0.04)	4.24 (4.35)	5.23 (4.36)	5.36 (4.79)
Total	140	+1.93 (-1.06)	4.55 (5.07)	5.38 (4.62)	5.36 (4.85)
Standard Deviation		1.73 (1.92)	.61 (.67)	.46 (.50)	.45 (.40)